

CRYPTO HEIST

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FADE IN:

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

It's a bitterly cold Christmas scene at the "Soaring Red-Tail Ranch," which includes a large guest house and a huge "barn" blanketed in snow.

An ambulance is parked in the snow outside a huge modern barn built for social events rather than for lodging horses and farm animals. The lights on the ambulance and blink brightly.

The big red doors of the barn open up only enough for two EMTs (mid-20s) to cart out ADDISON WEST/WHITE (28) on a gurney. She is a beautiful but unconscious blonde wearing a gorgeous white wedding dress. The EMTs wear heavy winter coats, gloves, and surgical masks as they race to load Addison into the back of the ambulance.

LUPE MARTINEZ (30), a Deputy Sheriff in uniform, steps out of the barn and shuts the big red door. She looks sadly at Addison and the ambulance.

LUPE (V.O.)

You may never have heard the story
of the biggest cryptocurrency heist
on United States soil, and not
because it was flawlessly executed,
(beat)

But because the story was buried by
a couple of spies who were robbed
on their wedding night!

EMT #1 puts an oxygen mask on Addison and covers her with a blanket while EMT #2 hops in the driver's seat, turns on the SIREN, and RACES away.

LUPE (V.O.)

It all started when I conducted a
wedding at this snowy ranch soon
after Christmas.

(beat)

I'm sure it was my training as a
Deputy Sheriff, but everyone and
everything about the evening seemed
deranged and more than a little
suspicious.

Lupe looks worried as she reenters the barn.

INT. BARN - EARLY EVENING

SUPER: "Two hours earlier."

The red double doors of the barn opened effortlessly for Lupe.

Three tables with six chairs each are decorated for a festive wedding reception with white linen tablecloths, elegant china, and far too many pieces of shining silverware. Party lights crisscross the rafters.

Wireless speakers spew country-western love songs from a bygone era.

The barn has Christmas wreaths and a lighted Christmas tree in the corner.

LUPE (V.O.)

I'm Deputy Sheriff Lupe Martinez. On weekends, I'm also a Justice of the Peace, offering cheap wedding services to supplement my meager income in a county filled with ranches like this one that rich city folk own as second or third homes. I usually get to eat great food after every wedding I perform, but the caterer's helicopter got grounded because of the weather, so this crap is from our local diner.

She sighs and turns her face to the catering table to hide her disappointment.

The caterer's table contains seven serving trays labeled as Steak in Gravy, Trout Almandine, Veggies and Cheese, Twice-stuffed Potatoes, and Salad.

LUPE (V.O.)

Every dish looked covered in cheese. If I told them I was vegan, I might have gotten shot before all that cheese could clog my arteries.

The dessert table contains a small wedding cake and a 50-cup coffee dispenser. A horse trough contains ice and 36 bottles of Champagne.

Lupe turns her attention to the server in a rented black suit, SANJAY DANI (25), who opens a bottle of Champagne.

LUPE (V.O.)

That's Sanjay Dani, a friend of mine from town.

(snickers)

He's putting his Master's Degree in Philosophy to its highest calling, waiting tables at the Country Club, and picking up catering gigs like this one. He says he's only dating me until he hooks a millionaire's daughter... Or a billionaire of either sex, whichever comes first.

(laughs)

He isn't picky and makes me laugh.

Lupe gets a text message that reads, "We're on our way down from the house."

LUPE

Sanjay, wait in the bathroom during the ceremony.

SANJAY

Why?

LUPE

They don't want anyone to see the wedding ceremony. Even the parents have to wait in the house.

SANJAY

Their parents aren't invited? Why?

LUPE

I didn't ask.

Sanjay is filling a single Champagne glass and sipping it. The visible rental tag is on the back collar of the black suit.

Lupe races to Sanjay and rips the glass out of his hand.

LUPE (CONT'D)

What the Hell are you doing, Sanjay?

Lupe removes the rental tag from Sanjay's coat. She pockets it.

SANJAY

(laughs)

I gotta make sure it's good enough for the guests. It's quantity control.

Lupe glares at him as she wipes the glass clean with a towel.

LUPE

I think you mean quality control.
If the groom catches you drinking,
you'll be fired!

SANJAY

I thought I was working for Mr.
West, the oil dude from Texas.

LUPE

Normally, the bride's parents flip
the bill for the wedding, but the
groom insisted for whatever reason.

Lupe wanders past the catering table again.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Did you check the food too?

SANJAY

It's all from our favorite Ptomaine
Diner.

LUPE

That's Romain Diner.

SANJAY

If you say so. I work there.

LUPE

The caterer that Mr. White
contracted with couldn't copier in
the food and staff here because of
the storm. You'll make a caterer's
salary tonight. How was the food?

SANJAY

I tried the gravy-covered meat
slabs posing as steak, trout caked
in crusty batter, the veggie
options smothered in cheese, twice-
stuffed potatoes, and salad with
more cheese, but as a Buddhist, I
mostly had the vegetable medley
because animals are...

(burps)

Sacred.

Lupe gets in Sanjay's face.

LUPE

Were they edible?

SANJAY

That's exactly how I would describe them... before discussing health insurance options.

LUPE

Alcohol also violates your Buddhist code of ethics because it can disrupt mindfulness and impede one's progress in the Noble Eightfold Path.

Sanjay gazes into Lupe's eyes.

SANJAY

Buddha gave me the night off in case you want to take advantage of me later tonight.

Lupe pushes him away.

LUPE

Keep every glass but yours filled, and serve the cake after the bride and groom cut it.

Lupe walks around the cake, examining it.

In the back of the cake, she spots a tiny sliver of cake missing, with frosting hastily covering the gap.

She glares at Sanjay, who looks away with a guilty look.

SANJAY

Eggs. I know. I suck as a vegan, but I'll be good the rest of the night in case you take me home.

Lupe laughs.

LUPE

It's a small town, but it ain't that small. After the wedding, start filling the Champagne glasses.

SANJAY

I'm off to the bathroom. I'll remember to wash my hands.

Sanjay laughs and trudges to the bathroom, as Lupe leaps to the barn door.

EXT./INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lupe taps the body cam on her belt.

LUPE (V.O.)

And, the photographer was a no-show because of the snowstorm. I told the bride and groom that I'd send them the footage, and they laughed like hell and said they'd pay me five grand for marrying them if I turned my body cam off for the night and never spoke of tonight with anyone.

(laughs)

They wanted a five-minute ceremony and a four-hour reception, with me invited. Fine with me, I said!

Lupe turns quickly to see the Christmas tree and Christmas lights.

LUPE (V.O.)

It's after Christmas, but they wanted to pretend this was a Christmas wedding. These two families don't travel over the Christmas holidays because they say it's too dangerous. I asked if the holidays were too dangerous or if they were too dangerous. They said, "Don't ask," and paid me in advance.

Lupe swings open the door of the barn and steps out into the cold; it's a harbinger of the rapidly approaching storm.

The wedding party trudges down from the main house.

JAWAN WHITE (30), a highly successful black businessman, reaches Lupe first. He wears a perfectly tailored, black tuxedo with a matching long coat. He doesn't extend an arm for a handshake.

SUPER: "Jawan White, CIA"

JAWAN

I'm Jawan White, the lucky groom.
You must be the Justice of the
Peace.

Lupe puts her hand out and then slowly takes it back.

LUPE

And Deputy Sheriff. Thanks for sharing the guest list and the bad news about the catering helicopter.

JAWAN

As long as the marriage is legal. We'll be out of here when the weather clears.

WEI LI (35), an Asian businessman in a tailored gray suit covered by a matching long coat. He extends his arm to Lupe.

SUPER: "Wei Li, CIA"

WEI

I'm Wei Li, Jawan's best friend, best man, and CFO. That's Chief...

LUPE

Financial Officer. I know.

Jawan, perturbed, turns to Wei.

JAWAN

I had you send her the guest list and the cancellation from the caterers that was accidentally sent to me.

Wei isn't listening as he focuses on the bride-to-be coming up behind them. Addison looks stunningly beautiful but cold in a wedding gown with a long white fur coat draped over her shoulders.

Jawan opens one arm for Addison to join him under his coat.

JAWAN (CONT'D)

This is Addison West, soon to be White.

SUPER: "Addison West, CIA"

Addison doesn't acknowledge Lupe.

CRYSTAL WEST (30), who is dressed like a fancy country-western singer, with a long leather coat, joins the group last.

CRYSTAL

Let's get this over with; I'm freezing.

SUPER: "Crystal West, Country Singer, not a spy."

JAWAN
That's Chrystal, Addison's older
sister and maid of honor.

Addison elbows Jawan while correcting him.

CHRYSTAL
That's "Maid of Honor."

Addison takes the fur coat off her shoulders and hands it to Wei.

ADDISON
Wei, hang up our coats in the barn
for the wedding.

CHRYSTAL
Why can't we wear our coats?

ADDISON
It will be a short ceremony. Tough
it out! We're on a body camera!

JAWAN
Our photographer bailed because of
the storm, and I like to have
everybody's hand where I can see
'em.

Wei takes the coats into the barn.

LUPE
You all look so beautiful. The snow
in the background will be a
wonderful memory.

Chrystal snarls at Lupe.

CHRYSTAL
Make it quick! We gotta be done
before our parents make it down
here!

JAWAN
We haven't got all day.

LUPE
Let's jump to the vows.

Wei returns and stands beside Wei, but he can't take his eyes
off Addison.

The bride and groom hold hands, exposing elegant gold watches
to Lupe, whose eyes open wide.

Lupe sees Addison struggling to speak.

Addison coughs and wheezes during her vows.

ADDISON

I (cough) Addison West, promise to love and (wheeze) you...

JAWAN

(interrupts, smiles)

Come on, baby. I promised you clean air, and you booked your sister's ranch where you wouldn't cough and wheeze!

LUPE

You both picked the perfect location for a wedding. Air doesn't come any cleaner than out here! When we miss the big city, we have to suck on a tailpipe. Right, Chrystal?

Addison coughs.

CHRYSTAL

If the air is so clean, why is Addie coughing?

Addison glares at her sister.

ADDISON

It's nerves, damn it! I get nervous when I get married or when I'm freezing to death.

Addison coughs, wheezes, and slaps Jawan's arm.

JAWAN

We also picked the ranch to deter our extended family and friends from joining us.

Addison smiles at Lupe.

ADDISON

We wanted to keep it small.

Jawan leans toward Lupe and winks.

JAWAN

We love our families to death, but we think they're clinically ill-behaved snobs.

Addison turns to her sister and laughs.

ADDISON
Present company included.

Chrystal pulls at her sister's dress.

CHRYSTAL
It's my ranch, bitch.

JAWAN
(winks at Lupe)
See what we mean?

LUPE
(to Chrystal)
Nice digs. If you ever need a house
sitter...

CHRYSTAL
Get on with the wedding before the
real assholes show up.

Jawan glares at Chrystal.

JAWAN
I hope you're not referring to my
family!

LUPE
Your vows, Jawan?

JAWAN
I promise to honor, cherish, and
obey.
(shakes in the cold)
God, it's cold. Move it along.

Lupe's eyes open wide as she turns to Wei.

LUPE
May we have the rings?

Wei hands Jawan his ring (a simple gold band), but struggles to take Addison's ring off his finger. Addison's ring has a diamond the size of an ice cube.

WEI
My finger swelled in the cold.

CHRYSTAL
Don't they shrink in the cold?

Jawan and Chrystal glare at Wei.

WEI
I didn't want to lose it.

CHRYSTAL
Cut off his finger.

Lupe's eyes open wider.

Wei hands Addison's ring to Jawan as Addison and Jawan shake their heads in disgust.

Anxiety causes Addison to wheeze and cough.

Jawan turns to Lupe.

JAWAN
Better hurry. We don't know how long she has.

CHRYSTAL
Cut the crap, Jawan.

Addison turns angry and goes to slap Jawan, but then she looks into the body cam and pulls her hand back.

LUPE
Do you take each other in marriage?

ADDISON	JAWAN
I do.	I do... not.

Lupe's eyes and Chrystal's eyes open wide in shock.

Jawan laughs and ducks as Addison slaps his shoulder.

JAWAN (CONT'D)	ADDISON (CONT'D)
I do. I do. Forever and ever. That was a joke!	It's a good thing our families didn't see this.

CHRYSTAL
Daddy would have shot you!

JAWAN
My dad would have whacked me upside the head.

Lupe shakes her head and continues undaunted.

LUPE
By the powers invested in me, blah, blah, blah.

Jawan and Addison laugh as Wei and Chrystal snarl.

LUPE (CONT'D)

You may now kiss each other.

They kiss wildly and passionately for a long time.

Wei looks away as Chrystal shakes her head in disgust.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Why were your families invited to
the reception but not the wedding?

Chrystal stomps into the barn.

WEI

You'll see.

Addison laughs and coughs as Jawan hugs Wei.

ADDISON

My nerves are shot already. I'd
better fetch my inhaler from our
room.

JAWAN

I'll get it for you, baby.

WEI

You lovebirds get in there, get
warm, and beat Chrystal to the
Champagne. I'll fetch the inhaler.

Wei races off.

INT. BARN - LATER

The guests are eating dinner and competing for speaking time.
The mood is tense as everyone tries to be "in charge."

Lupe stands in the back of the barn by the caterer's table.
Sanjay serves Champagne to the guests. He also serves a
little to himself from time to time.

Suddenly, Jawan falls out of his seat and onto the floor,
convulsing and holding his neck with both hands.

ADDISON

(yells)

Help! Jawan's choking!

Lupe races to Jawan's aid and lies him on his back as the
guests panic and gather around.

LUPE
Back up. Give him air.

CHRYSTAL
I'm calling 9-1-1.

She turns and makes a phone call.

Lupe checks his airway and sees nothing.

LUPE
Stand him up. Bend him over.

Bertrand and Wei help him up while Lupe uses a flat hand to pound Jawan's back four times.

Nothing comes out.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Stand him up for the Heimlich
maneuver.

Lupe performs the Heimlich maneuver.

Jawan GROANS, and they lay him on the floor.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Food poisoning?

Lupe turns Jawan's face to the side and forces her index and middle fingers into Jawan's throat to trigger vomiting.

Jawan vomits.

Seconds later, he groans in relief.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Does anyone else feel sick?

She looks around as everyone shakes their heads, 'No.'

WEI
It must have been too much
Champagne!

Jawan regains some strength and is helped to his feet while Sanjay grabs three hand towels and a plastic bag from the catering table, wipes up the vomit, and places the towels in the plastic bag.

JAWAN
I'm okay. I'm fine. Maybe water
from now on.

Everyone is relieved. Jawan turns to Lupe.

JAWAN (CONT'D)

Thank you for that.

LUPE

I'm glad my first-aid training came in handy.

(to Sanjay)

Thanks for the clean-up.

Addison guides Jawan back to his seat.

LUPE (V.O.)

It was the fastest and strangest wedding I had ever performed. And now, this!

Lupe smiles at the bride, Addison, in her gorgeous white wedding dress. Addison eats a tiny slice of wedding cake and glares at her new husband.

ADDISON

A small romantic Christmas wedding at a remote country estate, you said!

Jawan laughs innocently.

JAWAN

Off the grid, we said. Can't get much more remote!

Addison leans into Jawan.

ADDISON

Or less romantic! This is a freakin' barn.

JAWAN

It's your sister's barn. Blame her.

INT. BARN - LATER

Lupe looks at the small crowd and smiles weakly.

Lupe rests her full but untouched dinner plate on the caterer's table, sips coffee, and observes the guests.

Sanjay circles the floor to the maid of honor.

Chrystal glares at Sanjay by winking and pointing at her two half-empty glasses, thinking that she's flirting. He fills her drink glasses and rolls his eyes in disgust.

LUPE (V.O.)

That made Chrystal dislike Sanjay more. In the one minute I talked to her after the wedding, she confided in me that her music career got swiftly booted downstream with the meteoric rise of Taylor Swift. Chrystal said she wasn't bitter but showed me her conceal-and-carry permit and her pink nine-millimeter Glock in her Gucci purse, which made me uncomfortable. "Crypto needs protection," she said. I had to Google cryptocurrency to find out what it was.

In the back of the barn, Lupe puts on EarBuds and looks up 'cryptocurrency' on YouTube. She whispers to herself, but Sanjay wanders close to her to eavesdrop. Lupe smiles.

LUPE

Decentralized and unregulated.

(beat)

Offers electronic transfer of funds without banks to individuals around the globe.

(frowns)

Its value is impossible to determine, and it fluctuates wildly. Cartels and criminals use it to launder money? It may be used in tax evasion schemes.

Lupe sees Sanjay listening in, and she glares at him.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Cryptocurrency is outlawed in over a dozen countries, including China, India, Egypt, and Russia.

Wei stares at his oversized smartphone while gulping Champagne.

Wei stands abruptly and points at Jawan while reading from his phone.

WEI

I'm honored to give the customary speech about my best friend and partner, Jawan, on the occasion of his wedding to our best friend, Addison.

(smiles at Addison)

We both met Addison on the same night.

(to the crowd)

But she fell for the guy with the most money and the biggest... car.

Addison and Jawan chuckle politely, but the joke falls flat on the other guests, who look perplexed.

Lupe studies Wei as his speech drifts off...

INT. BARN - LATER

Wei concludes his remarks.

WEI

... so, join me by raising a glass and wishing Addison and Jawan happy and long lives... or for however long they stick it out!

Everyone raises a glass, laughs, and cheers.

Wei steals glances at Addison as he pats Jawan on the back.

LUPE (V.O.)

Wei told me that he had the two rings for the ceremony, but he didn't tell me that he met Addison the same night Jawan did, about a year ago. His expression and body language told me it was love at first sight, and the best man didn't win.

Lupe glances at the bride's family's table to see TATUM WEST (60), a Texas oilman in a Western version of a tuxedo, next to a much younger, Native American woman, DAKOTA WEST (35).

Tatum half-smiles at Jawan, while Dakota glances around at the strange barn. There are three extra seats at the table.

LUPE (V.O.)

Addison's father, Tatum West, is an oil baron and CEO of MidTex Petroleum who balked at the marriage. He introduced Dakota to me as "his third wife, part Comanche." He walked away when I asked Dakota, "Which part?" Dakota smiled politely even after I apologized for my unthinking comment. She's the CEO of Tatum's cattle ranching operations.

Lupe turns toward the groom's family's table to see BERTRAND WHITE (55), a Black lawyer in a black suit, and GILLIAN WHITE (40), a stoic-looking black woman. They barely speak. Again, there are three extra seats at the table.

LUPE (V.O.)

Rounding out the family of the groom are Bertrand White, the CEO of a successful law firm specializing in divorce cases, and his second ex-wife, Gillian, who is the self-proclaimed CEO of their marriage.

Lupe holds Bertrand's business card in front of her body cam.

LUPE (V.O.)

Even I had to laugh at Mr. White's business card.

INSERT Business Card which reads, "Bertrand White Esq., Divorce Attorney, "My first wife got nothin'!"

LUPE (V.O.)

I know I told them I'd turn off my body cam, but the Sheriff said I have to use it until everyone leaves. Orders are orders.

Sanjay wanders back to Lupe to grab another bottle of Champagne. They whisper as Lupe puts away Bertrand's business card.

LUPE

But no one's ordering the coffee after what happened to Jawan earlier.

SANJAY

It's decaf! I think they'd rather sleep.

LUPE

I drank the coffee. It was weak but not deadly.

SANJAY

(glances at the crowd)

I heard that when a coyote's paw gets stuck in a bear trap, it will chew the leg off to get away.

Lupe looks toward the guests and smiles weakly.

LUPE

Everyone here has all four paws caught in a trap. There is no escape, and we're surrounded by clinically ill-behaved snobs!

Sanjay grabs two cold bottles of Champagne.

Addison suddenly has difficulty breathing.

All eyes are on Addison, but no one moves.

Jawan stays calm and hands Addison a tall glass of water.

JAWAN

Have some water.

Wei angrily pushes an inhaler toward her.

WEI

She needs her inhaler, idiot! Every 30 seconds!

Addison continues wheezing, and everyone gathers around her.

Jawan turns on Wei as they all hear a SIREN in the distance.

JAWAN

Water thins mucus! And the inhaler!

TATUM

She shouldn't be drinking alcohol.

Chrystal yells at Tatum.

CHRYSTAL

It's her wedding day, Daddy!

Addison continues to wheeze. Bertrand panics.

BERTRAND

Should she lie down?

Jawan yells at his dad.

JAWAN
She needs to sit up. Panic worsens
the symptoms.

The SIREN is louder, so Lupe speaks over it.

LUPE
I forgot to cancel the ambulance
for Jawan. Good thing, we'll have
EMTs here soon.

Addison continues wheezing and begins to convulse.

JAWAN
(worried)
I've never seen her this bad.

Wei puts an arm around Jawan, but he pushes it off.

CHRYSTAL
This is more than asthma! More like
emphysema or somethin' worse.

Lupe's eyes open wide as she studies Chrystal.

LUPE
What are you suggesting?

CHRYSTAL
Don't look at me! I'm not a doctor.

TATUM
You're not much of a singer,
either!

We HEAR the Ambulance arrive with clanging snow chains.

Two EMTs (mid-20s) race into the barn to assess Addison. They wear thick winter coats, gloves, and surgical masks. One takes Addison's pulse, and the other checks her airway and uses Addison's inhaler on her.

LUPE
This is Addison White. She's
asthmatic, she was nervous about
the wedding, and she's been
drinking.

EMT #1
We have a weak pulse.
(to Lupe)
(MORE)

EMT #1 (CONT'D)

Where is the unconscious 30-year-old male who swallowed something?

Jawan's back is to the EMTs. He looks like he wasn't listening. He mumbles without turning around.

JAWAN

That was me. I'm fine now.

EMT #2

(to Lupe)

You failed to cancel that call.

LUPE

My bad, but good thing, huh?

TATUM

It's her wedding day, Goddamn it!
Do something!

EMT #1

(to Lupe)

Maybe she ate or drank the same thing as the first guy.

The two EMTs attend to Addison, who is non-responsive.

EMT #2

We'd better put her on O2 and get her to County!

Lupe bends over Addison to smell her breath.

JAWAN

The hospital?

BERTRAND

Is she dying?

EMT #1

It might be systemic shock. I'm sorry.

Lupe pulls EMT #2 to the side and whispers.

LUPE

I smelled bitter almonds on her breath.

EMT #2 nods to Lupe as though he understands.

EMT #2

We'll take you to the ER.

Lupe races back to the caterer's table, finds the plastic bag containing the towels with vomit, sniffs the bag, and RACES to the EMTs, who load Addison onto a gurney.

Jawan pleads with the EMTs as Chrystal places Addison's SMALL PURSE on top of her on the gurney.

JAWAN

I'm coming with you.

Lupe stands at the doors to the barn and yells.

LUPE

I'm afraid no one's leaving.

TATUM

Why the hell not?

LUPE

Jawan's food poisoning and Addison's asthma attack may not have been accidental or coincidental. I've got questions for everyone!

(glares at Jawan)

That includes you!

The crowd is angry and combative. Tatum pushes Lupe.

TATUM

I don't know what's going on here, but I'm going to find out!

LUPE

No, I'm going to find out.

Jawan pushes Tatum.

JAWAN

We all need to settle down.

Chrystal pushes Wei.

CHRISTAL

You wanted Addison for yourself, Creep!

Lupe separates Wei and Chrystal.

WEI

Are you telling me you didn't have the hots for Jawan?

CRYSTAL

You're such an idiot!

LUPE

Everyone, chill! I agree it looks suspicious when a bride and groom have accidents on the wedding night!

BERTRAND

I'll say! You are the worst security guard ever!

LUPE

I'm not a security guard! I'm a Deputy Sheriff, and it's my sworn duty to ask you all some questions to find out if something else is going on here! So take your goddamn seats!

The EMTs roll Addison to the ambulance as Lupe pulls Jawan aside.

LUPE (CONT'D)

You can go to the hospital and pick her up after my investigation and after the Champagne wears off.

JAWAN

What do you mean, investigation?

Lupe steps outside and shuts the barn doors behind her.

Lupe pauses to think.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

We fast-forward through the opening scene.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lupe reenters the barn and shuts the doors.

She sadly addresses the crowd.

LUPE

I smelled bitter almonds on Addison's breath and on the towels that were used to wipe up Jawan's vomit.

(MORE)

LUPE (CONT'D)

Sometimes, only sometimes, that could indicate cyanide poisoning, but one of the dishes served tonight was Trout Almandine from our local diner, so it could be food poisoning.

DAKOTA

Poisoning!?

LUPE

I don't know. I'm new to this sort of thing. I usually deal with speeding tickets, DUIs, and pets off a leash, but I'm bound by law to investigate and file a report that involves an ambulance. That's what I'm going to do.

GILLIAN

Surely you can't think any of us poisoned them?

LUPE

I'll have to rule out external sources like rat poison in the area, harmful chemicals, and the food, water, drinks, and medicines you're each taking.

(beat)

Stay calm, obey my instructions, and don't, I repeat, don't impede my investigation when I interview you. No more Champagne or alcohol tonight.

Tatum sits down and calmly opens his coat to reveal a shoulder holster with a pistol. Everyone sees this.

TATUM

I got a permit for this.

Lupe eyes the pistol, smiles at Tatum, and meanders slowly to his table.

The others look on worriedly.

Dakota stands and glares at Tatum.

DAKOTA

You will not disrupt your daughter's tragic evening. You have no idea if she's still alive!

Dakota points to the floor under the table where Addison was sitting.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

There's her phone on the floor.

Jawan panics as he goes to pick up her phone.

JAWAN

How am I supposed to call her to check on her?

Jawan paces angrily.

DAKOTA

The ambulance can call me on the radio or my phone.

Tatum looks up at Dakota and sounds cranky.

TATUM

Something smells wrong here, alright, and it ain't me.

CHRYSTAL

Jesus, Daddy. This ain't about you!

LUPE

We'll keep this civil, or I'll arrest you all for impeding!

Tatum takes out a flask, unscrews the top, takes a swig, and glares at Lupe.

Lupe glares back and pulls out a notebook.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Jawan, what did you have to eat and drink tonight?

JAWAN

The meat-whatever-it-was, potatoes, dinner rolls, cake, and Champagne.

TATUM

(yells at Jawan)

I ate the same thing, and I didn't toss my cookies!

Lupe glares at Tatum.

LUPE

Jawan, what did Addison eat?

Jawan looks away.

JAWAN

She had the trout and cheesy
veggies, with a double dose of
Champagne.

LUPE

That explains the almond smell of
her breath.

Dakota points angrily at Jawan.

DAKOTA

Or he could have slipped her the
cyanide.

Lupe gets in Dakota's face.

LUPE

Mrs. West, there is no evidence of
cyanide. That takes a specialized
test to detect...

Wei, staring at his phone, interrupts her.

WEI

The Lee and Jones test uses sodium
hydroxide, iron sulfate, and
hydrochloric acid on her stomach
contents.

Everyone glares at Wei, who holds up and shakes his phone.

WEI (CONT'D)

It's the AI connection on my phone.
Don't look at me that way!

SILENCE

Lupe paces as she yells.

LUPE

They'll test her at the ER. We have
to assume that no one here is
psychotic enough to target a bride
and groom on their wedding night.

BERTRAND

I sure the Hell hope not!

Bertrand takes out a flask from his coat pocket, glares at
Tatum, toasts him, and takes a swig.

BERTRAND (CONT'D)

This was my grandfather's from the Prohibition days in Georgia.

Tatum glares back at Bertrand.

TATUM

We've got a word for that!

Lupe stands between them and threatens them both.

LUPE

You're both close to obstruction charges. Knock it off!

(points to the back of the barn)

Let me hold my interviews back there. Sanjay will bring you coffee, soft drinks, or water if you ask nicely and behave yourselves.

SANJAY

Yes, Massa, anything you say, Massa.

Chrystal is the only one who laughs.

LUPE

I'm sorry. Sanjay was born with a sharp tongue and no filter.

SANJAY

I'm sorry. Don't bite the foot-and-mouth that feeds you.

Lupe shakes her head in disgust.

LUPE

I'll randomize the order of the interviews by putting your names on pieces of paper and drawing them from a bowl. Your side comments will not be appreciated.

She holds up her phone and points to her body camera.

LUPE (CONT'D)

However, the first thing I'll do is watch the video I was asked to take by Addison and Jawan from earlier today.

Bertrand stands angrily.

BERTRAND

I never granted permission to be taped.

JAWAN

Dad?

LUPE

It's a wedding. You have to expect to be taped. I'm sorry, Mr. White.

JAWAN

Sit down and be respectful, Dad. Please.

Chrystal holds up a key on a ring with a dozen other keys on it.

CHRYSTAL

Hey, Deputy, you can use the tack room for questioning your suspects.

Lupe politely accepts the key.

LUPE

I thought that was a locked backdoor.

She glares at the group.

LUPE (CONT'D)

My deputy, Sanjay, will be keeping a close eye on you.

SANJAY

Deputy? That better mean another paycheck.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lupe enters the tack room, a large, empty room with plumbing for a kitchenette, bathroom, and a separate locked entrance. It contains a twin bed and a small table with two chairs.

Lupe brings in another chair before taking a seat.

She pulls out her smartphone, takes out two Earbuds, and places them in her ears.

She pushes a few buttons and picks up the start of the video.

INSERT VIDEO

INT. BARN - EARLY EVENING

Lupe and Sanjay are alone in the barn.

Sanjay fills Champagne glasses while Lupe looks down the road.

SANJAY

How was the wedding ceremony, Miss
Injustice of the Peace?

LUPE

(not turning to him)
I told you not to call me that. It
sounds bad. I do it for extra
money, like you do catering.

SANJAY

I know your trailer.

LUPE

It will be a house someday and a
ranch after that.
(excited)
Here they come.

SANJAY

(whispers)
What are they like?

Lupe looks back at Sanjay.

LUPE

Expensive bling and threads. They
all look like they've never been
hugged.
(beat)
They weren't invited to the
ceremony.

SANJAY

Neither was I. You forced me to
wait in the restroom.

LUPE

They demanded a short ceremony with
the best man and maid of honor. I
had to finish before their parents
arrived.

SANJAY

That's odd.

LUPE

His folks came from New York, and her folks from Austin, and they wouldn't let them observe the nuptials. They said I'd understand after I met them.

END VIDEO

Lupe holds her smartphone close to her (the screen can't be seen by anyone else). She taps away and reads a short webpage in a few seconds.

Lupe turns away from her phone, removes one of her EarBuds, and exits the tack room.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lupe addresses the group.

LUPE

I'll start my interviews with you, Chrystal, so that I may thank you for the use of your tack room.

Chrystal shakes her head in disgust and trudges back to Lupe and into the tack room.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lupe locks the door and looks around before sitting across from Chrystal.

LUPE

Do you mind if I record this?

CHRISTAL

What have I got to lose?

LUPE

You tell me.

Chrystal looks away.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Can you state your full name?

CHRISTAL

Chrystal Ophelia West. I legally dropped Ophelia in middle school for obvious reasons. My real mom understood.

LUPE

Was your father okay with that?

CHRYSTAL

He signed the form after signing his first divorce papers.

LUPE

That must have been tough.

CHRYSTAL

You don't know me!

LUPE

I know that your country music career didn't tank... it never got off the ground.

Chrystal turns to glare at Lupe.

CHRYSTAL

You're not exactly a big-city detective.

LUPE

I know that the white skin on your wrists, chest, and ears suggests you've been hocking your jewelry.

CHRYSTAL

Or more likely, it's improper to wear more bling than the bride on her wedding day!

Chrystal confidently displays her wrists to Lupe.

CHRYSTAL (CONT'D)

They wanna see her ring, not my bling, Sherlock!

Lupe looks away.

LUPE

Maybe you're right. Sorry. But your keychain is more fitting for an estate caretaker than an owner.

CHRYSTAL

I bought the place a few months ago as a second home. I haven't hired my staff yet, which is something you'll never understand. Have you got any real questions?

Chrystal glares at Lupe. Lupe turns to glare back.

LUPE

How do you get along with your
sister?

CHRYSTAL

She asked me to be her maid of
honor at her tiny freakin' wedding.

LUPE

How well do you get along with your
parents?

Chrystal laughs.

CHRYSTAL

Children are born to disappoint
wealthy parents. My dad calls me
his "Gailure" --

(beat)

His "Gay Failure" is because of the
choices I've made, turning away
from the Baptist Church, becoming
gay, and not working for him as a
rigger in his oil fields. I'd
sooner work for my stepmom branding
cattle, but she hates me, too.

LUPE

Do you know any reason why anyone
would want to hurt your sister or
brother-in-law?

Chrystal stares at Lupe with a perplexed look.

CHRYSTAL

It's their wedding day! Are you
freakin' mental? We may not be the
best family in the world, but we're
not the worst! The Whites are the
worst!

Lupe looks away and mutters.

LUPE

You're telling me.

CHRYSTAL

What was that?

Chrystal stands and stomps to the door, cussing under her
breath.

LUPE
I said, send in Wei Li!

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Chrystal stomps up to Wei as the others gather around them.

CHRYSTAL
That loser deputy in there thinks
one of you tried to kill Jawan and
Addie on their wedding day.

Everyone gasps in anger.

BERTRAND
She won't get away with this!

TATUM
Hell no!

CHRYSTAL
Wei, Deputy Dog, wants to
interrogate you next.

Wei steps back, worried and afraid.

WEI
I didn't do anything.

CHRYSTAL
You've seen those cop shows!
Anything you say can and will be
used against you in a court of law!

Wei trudges toward the tack room.

JAWAN
Court of law? Nobody tried to do
anything. Addison had an asthma
attack.

Chrystal turns and whispers to Wei.

CHRYSTAL
Don't say nothin'! Got it?

LUPE (O.C.)
I heard all that!

Wei glances back at the group before trudging in like a lamb
to slaughter.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wei silently takes a seat.

LUPE
Mind if I record this?

WEI
I wish you wouldn't.

LUPE
Fine. I have a good memory.

Lupe sets aside her smartphone on the table, but glances down at her body cam, which Wei cannot see.

WEI
Am I a suspect or a person of interest?

LUPE
You watch too many cop shows. This is an interview for my incident report.

Wei snickers.

WEI
I can play overly dramatic.
(serious)
You won't get anything from me.

LUPE
That won't be necessary. Informal interviews work best.

Lupe looks curiously at the best man.

LUPE (CONT'D)
State your full name.

WEI
Wei Li.

LUPE
Is that a common name in China?

WEI
You'll be able to search that easily with AI.

Lupe stands and paces.

LUPE
You're not being fully cooperative.

WEI
I'm not sure how to cooperate with
you after two minor and unrelated
health incidents.

Lupe stops pacing and stares at Wei.

LUPE
That's what we call speculation,
Mr. Li. How well do you know Jawan
White?

WEI
Business partners, best friends,
best man. What more can I say?

LUPE
What business are you in?

WEI
Imports and exports.

LUPE
That's vague.
(beat)
Does Mr. White treat you well?

WEI
He made me a rich man.

Lupe gets in Wei's face.

LUPE
I'll take that as a 'no.' Did he
steal the woman of your dreams?

WEI
I was joking out there.

LUPE
Huh.

Lupe paces.

WEI
I couldn't be happier for them
both, except to wish for them to
adopt better families.

Wei laughs, but Lupe doesn't.

LUPE

Do you know any reason why anyone
would want to hurt Addison or
Jawan?

Wei pauses and then glares at Lupe.

WEI

Do you realize how sick and twisted
that sounds? Tonight of all nights?

Wei stands calmly with a look of disappointment at Lupe.

WEI (CONT'D)

You're turning what would have been
the most joyous night ever into a
nightmare.

LUPE

I'm sorry that you feel that way. I
have to do my job. Please send in
Mr. and Mrs. White.

WEI

Together?

LUPE

It's an interview, not a trial.

Wei stomps out and shuts the door.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Sanjay is clearing plates and glasses from the tables, while
everyone else whispers.

Wei leaps over to the whispering group.

He doesn't see that Lupe followed him out of the tack room.

WEI

She wants to see Mr. and Mrs. White
next. She's snooping into
everyone...

LUPE

(interrupts)

I have to submit a report whenever
an ambulance is called to a scene.
I'm collecting basic information
for my report.

(beat)

(MORE)

LUPE (CONT'D)

Sanjay, would you please search the bathroom, kitchen area, and storage closet for any rodent activity, rat poison, or chemicals of any kind? I'd like to rule out sources of contamination.

SANJAY

Better check the food from the diner, Chief.

Lupe sharply corrects Sanjay.

LUPE

'Chief' is considered a derogatory term when used by non-indigenous people.

Dakota glares at Tatum.

DAKOTA

Yes, it is.

TATUM

Don't get your knickers in a twist, Chief.

LUPE

I'd like to interview Tatum and Dakota next if you don't mind.

WEI

I thought you wanted to interview the Whites next.

Lupe turns and strides back to the tack room.

LUPE

I changed my mind.

Tatum and Dakota glare at each other.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - NIGHT

The interview is in progress, with Tatum being defensive.

TATUM

I knew we shouldn't have come!

DAKOTA

Nobody in their right mind would want to hurt that couple, Deputy!
(MORE)

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

'Course, nobody out there has a
right mind.

Lupe smiles at Tatum.

LUPE

Why did you come, Mr. West?

Tatum looks away.

TATUM

Who doesn't wanna see their
daughter married?

LUPE

You weren't invited to the
ceremony.

(beat)

And, I'll ask the questions.

(beat)

Why weren't you and your wife
invited to the wedding ceremony?

They HEAR a shot fired from the barn. BAM!

Lupe pulls out her service pistol and glares at the Wests.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Stay here and keep your heads down.

She exits into the main room.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lupe races into the barn to see three guests pointing pistols
at each other. Chrystal is aiming at Wei, Bertrand is aiming
at Chrystal, and Gillian is aiming at Bertrand.

Jawan stands with both arms and hands raised like he's
surrendering.

Sanjay hides under the food table.

Lupe yells.

LUPE

On the floor, everyone!

Everyone dives to the floor.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I meant "Guns on the floor." Slide
those pistols away from you.

Bertrand and Gillian slide their pistols away from themselves. Chrystal does not.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Now, Chrystal!

Lupe turns around to see Tatum and Dakota on the ground, but Tatum is holding his pistol.

LUPE (CONT'D)
You too, Mr. West! You two were supposed to stay in the tack room!

Chrystal and Tatum push their pistols in front of them.

Lupe looks around. She yells.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Sanjay?

Sanjay slowly exits from under the food table. His hands are shaking.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Sanjay, dump the basket of cheesy rolls and go pick up all the pistols! And someone better tell me who fired that shot and what the Hell is going on around here!

Chrystal, Bertrand, Gillian, and Jawan start yelling loudly all at once as Sanjay collects the weapons.

BERTRAND
Nothing happened!

CHRYSTAL
Oh, something happened, alright!

WEI
She was gonna kill me!

Jawan points toward the coat rack.

JAWAN
My stepmom shot my best coat!

LUPE
Chrystal, why were you aiming at Wei?

CHRYSTAL
I think he poisoned Jawan.

LUPE
Bertrand, why were you aiming at
Chrystal?

BERTRAND
Because she was aiming at my son's
business partner.

LUPE
And, Gillian, why were you aiming
at your husband?

GILLIAN
I wasn't aiming at the coats! I
don't see well without my glasses.

Sanjay holds the basket of pistols. His hands still shake.

SANJAY
I got 'em, Lupe.

Sanjay sets the basket back on the food table.

SANJAY (CONT'D)
But I'm going home now.

Lupe holds her pistol in the air.

LUPE
Nobody is going anywhere.
(beat)
Get back in your seats! All of you.

Lupe moves to inspect the coats.

She sees a bullet hole in the chest of Jawan's fancy coat.

She stomps over to Gillian and gets in her face.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Did you discharge a weapon in a
crowded barn?

Gillian looks away.

GILLIAN
We were humiliated! Mmmm. Mmmm.
After all my husband did for that
spoiled, ungrateful boy.

Gillian glares at Jawan.

LUPE
Did you shoot his coat?

Gillian glares at Lupe.

GILLIAN
He wasn't in it!

Lupe is furious.

LUPE
Shooting a gun in a public place is a crime, even if nobody sustains injuries from the gunfire. In our state, it's prosecuted as a misdemeanor but carries up to six months in jail and up to \$1,000 in fines!

Bertrand glances casually at his wife.

BERTRAND
I'll miss you, baby!

Gillian leans over to choke Bertrand, but stops herself.

BERTRAND (CONT'D) JAWAN
The prenup! The prenup?

BERTRAND (CONT'D)
I warned you, Jawan!

Lupe waves her pistol again.

LUPE
Stop this nonsense right now!

Gillian collapses in her chair, clenching her fists.

BERTRAND
I have witnesses.

Gillian glares at Bertrand like he's a dead man. Then she glares at Jawan.

GILLIAN
You're dead to me, too. You'll never set foot in my house again.
(glances at Bertrand)
Prenup. Huh!

Bertrand slams his fist on the table.

BERTRAND
That house is worth...

Lupe glances around and yells.

LUPE

I need you all to act like adults
while I complete my interviews.

(to Gillian)

We'll be speaking soon.

Chrystal snickers.

LUPE (CONT'D)

As for Chrystal, Bertrand, and
Gillian, it's a gross misdemeanor
to aim a gun toward another human
being, which in this state carries
up to \$2,000 in fines and up to a
year in jail.

The guests fold their hands like scolded schoolchildren.

Lupe pulls at the sleeves of Tatum and Dakota and guides them
back to the tack room while shaking her head in disgust.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tatum and Dakota sink into chairs as Lupe shuts the door.

LUPE

It's such a wonder why the parents
weren't invited to the wedding
ceremony. I'm sure stuff like this
happens at Thanksgiving, Christmas,
hell, even Groundhog Day in Texas!

Tatum and Dakota look away in opposite directions.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I'll ask you once more. Do you know
why anyone would like to harm the
newlyweds?

TATUM

It doesn't take a rocket scientist
to know that the Asian was in love
with our daughter!

Dakota glares at Tatum.

DAKOTA

That's your daughter, and that was
a racial slur, you fat, pale-faced
bastard.

Tatum raises his hand to slap Dakota, but Lupe slaps his hand
away.

LUPE

Are you insane? I'm right here as a witness, and assault and battery charges could come with a fine of up to \$2,000 and another six months in jail.

TATUM

Another six months, or the same six months?

LUPE

Back to back! I can also file charges of impeding an investigation for adding to the chaos out there. Did you point your pistol at anyone tonight?

Tatum is silent, but Dakota whispers to Lupe loud enough for Tatum to hear.

DAKOTA

At Chrystal.

TATUM

I was horsing around, and so was she.

LUPE

You people are nuts. Those are loaded weapons!

TATUM

Dakota never liked my only daughter.

DAKOTA

You have two daughters who hate you.

Lupe rolls her eyes in disgust.

Dakota confides in Lupe.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Both of his daughters think I married Tatum only for his money.

TATUM

You did!

LUPE

Did you?

DAKOTA

(to Tatum)

No, I married you for the land.

(MORE)

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 My land. The land of my ancestors.
 (to Lupe)
 No prenup.

Dakota points to Tatum and leans to whisper to Lupe, but Tatum can hear her.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 Type II Diabetes, high blood pressure, and frequent irritable bowel syndrome.

Lupe turns away as Dakota whispers more.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)
 And erectile dysfunction and shingles all across his back.
 (to Tatum)
 Show her. The shingles, not the ED.

Lupe stands, unable to cope with the Wests any longer.

LUPE
 That's all for now. Can you please send in the Whites?

Tatum glares at his wife before marching out.

DAKOTA
 They are all illegal immigrants to me.

Lupe holds her head with both hands and continues holding it when Bertrand and Gilliam walk in.

LUPE
 Take a seat. Do you mind if I record my interview?

BERTRAND
 I most certainly do mind, and I want my lawyer present.

LUPE
 It's only an interview.

GILLIAN
 I don't give interviews.

LUPE
 Fine. I'll talk. You listen.

Lupe shuts the door and paces while she speaks.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Your only son invited you to his wedding...

GILLIAN

Reception.

LUPE

Fine. You should both be happy he found the love of his life.

BERTRAND

That would be 'the money of his life.'

Lupe gets in Bertrand's face.

LUPE

Do you think he married Addison for her money?

Gillian laughs.

GILLIAN

It isn't even real money! It's that cryptocurrency shit.

Bertrand laughs.

BERTRAND

Dumb-ass kid, but at least he avoids all that crypto shit.

LUPE

Which is what Addison's entire life is all about.

BERTRAND

It made her a bigger target for bank robbers.

LUPE

What are you talking about?

GILLIAN

When you buy cryptocurrency as an individual, you become your own bank.

Lupe steps back, stunned.

BERTRAND

That's right. With a non-custodial wallet, you have sole access to your funds, which are protected by passcodes that only you can set.

GILLIAN

It's called DeFi for Decentralized Financing.

BERTRAND

If someone gets your access codes, you can be robbed by anyone!

GILLIAN

I'm sure you heard about the Florida gang that conducted home invasions and tortured victims into giving up their crypto passcodes.

BERTRAND

They caught the St. Felix gang a year ago. They stole \$3.5 million between 2020 and 2024.

LUPE

Never heard about them. Am I the only one in the world who knows nothing about cryptocurrency?

Bertrand and Gillian nod, 'Yes.'

LUPE (CONT'D)

Do you think Addison is an evil mastermind?

Bertrand and Gillian look away in opposite directions.

LUPE (CONT'D)

How much money is she worth?

BERTRAND

You can't find out. It's not as easy as looking her up on Whats-her-networth-dot-com.

GILLIAN

It's all secret.

LUPE

So it could be millions.

BERTRAND

You don't go to these lengths not to be seen for a few million dollars. I'd guess billions.

Lupe's eyes open wide.

GILLIAN

They don't own traceable houses or fancy cars.

BERTRAND

They take private jets everywhere on random schedules.

GILLIAN

Who says, "Absolutely no gifts" on a wedding invitation?

BERTRAND

They were asking for crypto! Untraceable, tax-free, crypto.

Lupe collapses into her chair, astounded.

LUPE

That's why everyone here acts like a CEO. You are CEOs and multi-millionaires. That's why Addison and Jawan didn't allow you all to bring your personal assistants, bodyguards, or security. They didn't trust them.

(looks away)

It's why you are all packing heat.

Bertrand and Gillian nod, 'Yes.'

BERTRAND

Gillian dabbled in crypto DeFi for years before getting robbed.

LUPE

(to Gillian)

You were robbed?

GILLIAN

Forty million dollars worth of crypto, two years ago. I can't talk about it.

BERTRAND

That would be worth twice that now!

GILLIAN

(angry)

I don't want to talk about it.

BERTRAND

The biggest cash heist in U.S. history was when six men stole \$18.9 million from the Dunbar Armored trucking company in Los Angeles in 1997. Our robbery took two guys ten minutes.

LUPE

Crime does pay! How did the criminals get your secret key codes?

BERTRAND

One man put a gun to my head from the backseat of my car, and the other said he'd cut her toes off one at a time unless...

GILLIAN

I gave them everything they wanted.

BERTRAND

They would have shot us both.

LUPE

Why didn't they?

BERTRAND

So they could come back for more anytime.

Lupe is open-eyed and speechless.

GILLIAN

We are never safe. None of us is. That's why I quit.

BERTRAND

In 2022, the five top crypto robberies netted \$1.48 billion, all involving DeFi.

Lupe paces.

LUPE

That's why Addison and Jawan had cold feet about getting married. They'd be sitting ducks, and so would all of you.

(MORE)

LUPE (CONT'D)

(beat)

If those same bad guys were able to follow any of you here, they could do the same thing to...

Lupe turns her back to make a call on her radio.

LUPE (CONT'D)

This is Deputy Martinez at the Soaring Red-Tail Ranch on County Road 289. Over.

We hear the crackly voice of a friendly female DISPATCH OFFICER.

DISPATCH OFFICER (V.O.)

Come in, Lupe. This is Sheryl. Watch out when you come back to town. The storm is...

LUPE

Sheryl, can you confirm that the ambulance dropped off Ms. Addison West or Addison White at the county hospital? Over.

DISPATCH OFFICER (V.O.)

I'll confirm. Hold on. Over.

Lupe paces anxiously, and Bertrand and Gillian look scared.

TENSE MOMENTS

DISPATCH OFFICER (V.O.)

Lupe, I'm sorry. County has no record of an ambulance being called tonight. It's being serviced at the gas station.

Lupe looks toward the barn in fright.

LUPE

Dispatch put an APB out for an ambulance or any van heading west on County Road 289 and beyond. They have a forty-minute head start on us.

Lupe turns to the camera (fourth wall) in horror.

LUPE (CONT'D)

The ambulance drivers have Addison.

Lupe races out with Bertrand and Gillian behind her.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is seated but fidgeting nervously.

Lupe is calm but deadly serious.

LUPE

How many of you are trading in
cryptocurrency in the Decentralized
Financing way?

All but Jawan and Sanjay raise their hands.

Lupe looks around and is shocked to see Gillian's hand go up.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Gillian, I thought you quit.

JAWAN

So did I.

Lupe glares around the room.

LUPE

Teach me everything you can about
ways to avoid being robbed of your
cryptocurrency.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST ROAD - SAME TIME

The back door of the ambulance is cracked open a few inches.

Inside the parked ambulance, we HEAR Addison SCREAM.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

The two EMTs sit beside Addison, whose hands and feet are tied spread-eagled to the stretcher, in her wedding dress but covered by a thin sheet. The EMTs wear ski masks, and their voices are distorted by mechanisms embedded in their masks. EMT #1 holds an EpiPen. They are videotaping her from the waist up. She's screaming.

Addison SHAKES in fear.

She SCREAMS again.

EMT #1

Scream all you want. No one around
for fifty kilometers.

EMT #2
We don't want to hurt you.

Addison SCREAMS again.

ADDISON
What do you want with me?

EMT #1
We want your new husband.

ADDISON
You knew about the wedding?

EMT #2
The boss knows everything!

EMT #1 dumps out the contents of Addison's purse between her legs, covered by a thin sheet.

EMT #1
Inhaler, lipstick, lace
handkerchief. Where is your goddamn
phone?

ADDISON
I don't know. I must have left it
in the barn.

EMT #2 holds out a binder with photos of all the guests in the barn taken with a body cam, but everyone is fuzzy.

EMT #2
Who's the cop?

ADDISON
Lupe something. I don't know.
Deputy Sheriff or something.

EMT #1
Who is the caterer?

Addison yells.

ADDISON
He's staff! I didn't pay him any
attention.

EMT #2 shows Addison a photo of Tatum West.

EMT #2
Who is this guy?

Addison looks away.

EMT #2 (CONT'D)
He's packing heat!

ADDISON
He's an old friend of my husband's.
I don't know him.

Addison glares at the crooks.

EMT #1 slaps Addison across the mouth.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
You went there to take my husband,
but you got me instead!

The EMTs stare at each other.

EMT #1
You will do. You give him a call,
yes?

EMT #1 holds a BURNER PHONE next to Addison's ear.

EMT #1 (CONT'D)
What's the number?

Addison looks away.

EMT #1 holds up bolt cutters.

EMT #1 (CONT'D)
Pick a toe.

Addison quickly responds.

ADDISON
203-555-1745.

EMT #1 punches in the number.

EMT #2
Tell him to deposit \$10 million in
Crypto in our holding account in
two hours.

ADDISON
He deals in stocks and securities,
not Crypto.

The EMTs stare at each other, worried.

EMT #1
I hope this is not a repeat of
Florida.

EMT #2 yells.

EMT #2
Tell your new husband you will be
tortured until he turns over his
cold wallet!

Addison shakes in fear.

EMT #1 shows a REMOTE CONTROL DEVICE to Addison.

EMT #1
We placed explosives around the
barn to blow it up, yes? Tell the
cop to report you safely back to
the ranch, or you die a slow,
painful death. No cops or everyone
in the barn, KABOOM!

EMT #1 turns on the remote control device, which lights up
like a Christmas Tree.

Addison's hands shake as she HEARS Jawan's phone RING.

EMT #2
No one leaves the barn! Got it?

BACK TO:

INT. BARN - SAME TIME

Lupe is busy writing notes on her phone when Jawan's phone
RINGS.

JAWAN
Unknown number. Probably a robocall
again.

Lupe races to his side.

LUPE
Answer it! Stay calm.

Lupe bends her ear to the phone

JAWAN
Hello?

ADDISON (V.O.)
It's me.

Jawan panics and yells as Lupe tries to calm him down.

JAWAN

Oh my God. Are you okay?

The others race to Jawan to listen in.

JAWAN (CONT'D)

Where are you? Are you safe?

ADDISON (V.O.)

I'm in danger. I was kidnapped for ransom.

(yells)

\$10 million in crypto.

Everyone but Lupe GASPS and gives away that the crowd is listening in.

Lupe pushes the crowd back and glares at them.

JAWAN

What do we do?

ADDISON (V.O.)

First, no one can leave the barn, or it will blow up.

Everyone but Lupe GASPS.

Lupe stares at them angrily.

JAWAN

Okay. No one leaves. Got it.

ADDISON (V.O.)

Tell the cop to report that I was returned safely to the ranch and not to involve any more cops or the FBI, or I'll be killed and the barn will blow up.

JAWAN

What about the ransom?

ADDISON (V.O.)

They want access to your cold wallet and crypto passcode thingies in two hours.

Jawan is angry.

JAWAN

It's in securities! Stocks and bonds! \$10 million! That could take days to sell and move.

(MORE)

JAWAN (CONT'D)

It's the holidays for Christ's sake! The market's closed!

ADDISON (V.O.)

They don't want your stocks; they want all of your cryptocurrency like the two thieves in Florida! Or they'll cut off my toes!

We HEAR Addison's face being SLAPPED.

CLICK. The call ends. Jawan jumps up and down.

JAWAN

We got this. They're rookies! They were after only \$10 million. They have no idea what Addison and I are worth.

Everyone stares at Jawan with sad, perplexed faces until Lupe, Bertrand, and Tatum turn angry.

LUPE

They have your wife hostage. And there she was giving us clues.

CHRYSTAL

What clues?

LUPE

She emphasized FBI, the number two, toes, and Florida.

Bertrand panics and paces in the barn.

BERTRAND

They rigged the barn to blow up.

WEI

They hung up on you, idiot! You don't know how to get her back!

Jawan collapses into a chair.

He holds his head with his hands.

TATUM

What do we do now?

LUPE

First, I let dispatch know we have a hostage situation. They'll give the FBI my contact info.

(MORE)

LUPE (CONT'D)

I use my body cam to get photos of the perps to send to them.

CHRYSTAL

Wait! They said no FBI.

JAWAN

Body cam? We said no cameras!

LUPE

I'm in charge. Got it?

(pats Jawan)

Addison and I are in charge now.

Chrystal looks away.

LUPE (CONT'D)

We'll plan what we're going to tell the perps when they call you back.

JAWAN

How do you know they'll call back?

LUPE

Because they haven't been paid yet. Sanjay, get me a list of everyone's Social Security numbers. First thing the FBI is going to ask for. And Jawan...

JAWAN

7:19 PM Mountain Standard Time from an unknown number. Duration of call, approximately two minutes.

Lupe paces.

LUPE

It's good that they don't know about Addison's crypto, but she's in a dangerous situation. We have the exact time of the call, so I'll have the FBI ping all phone calls in the county at that time. It's doubtful they've left the county.

BERTRAND

Good thinking. But what about the crypto funds the kidnapers want?

JAWAN

They're going to be very disappointed.

LUPE

We're stalling, but they can't know that. I need each of you to prepare a list of your crypto holdings and the various passcodes to reach them.

They take out their phones and pull up "Notes," but they all pause and look around suspiciously.

No one is typing into their Notes.

Lupe texts the Dispatch Officer. The text reads, "Kidnap for ransom in progress. Patch me into the FBI on JusticeConnect."

Lupe addresses the group.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I'll use the tack room as my Incident Command Center. If the door is closed, you may not enter without knocking. I'll keep you informed, but I will not share details. Jawan, text me the exact time of the first call. Nobody looks outside or tries to leave!

Lupe's phone receives a CALL with a special FBI RINGTONE.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lupe answers the video call from AGENT COLLINS (40s), a stern woman in a dark blue suit.

AGENT COLLINS

This is Agent Deshaun Collins of the FBI, badge number 85472. To whom am I speaking?

LUPE

Deputy Sheriff Lupe Martinez Badge Number 43981. I'm at...

AGENT COLLINS

We've got eyes on you, but the imagery is poor due to the storm. I'll need everyone's Social.

LUPE

I'm on it. The victim's name is Addison West or White.

AGENT COLLINS

Too common. Text me the Socials
when you...

LUPE

Yes, Ma'am. The perps are demanding
the husband's cold wallet for his
cryptocurrency, or they'll start
cutting toes, but Jawan, the groom,
doesn't own crypto, and Addison
emphasized four words on the ransom
call: FBI, the number two, toes,
and Florida.

SILENCE

AGENT COLLINS

I'm running crypto, kidnap, the
number two, toes, and Florida in
our system now.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

LUPE

I'll call you back, Ma'am.

The Agent is abrupt.

AGENT COLLINS

Please don't call me ma'am. It's
Deshaun or Agent Collins.

CLICK

The Agent ends the call.

Lupe opens the door to see Sanjay looking worried.

LUPE

Did you get everyone's Social?

Sanjay shows Lupe his phone with names and Social Security
numbers. Jawan's name, Addison's name, and Sanjay's name have
a '?' after them.

SANJAY

Almost?

LUPE

You don't know your Social Security
number?

SANJAY

I forgot it.

LUPE
Forgot it?

SANJAY
I don't have one. Yet.

LUPE
Green card?

SANJAY
Not exactly.

Lupe rolls her eyes in disgust.

LUPE
Airdrop me your list.

Lupe pushes Sanjay out the door. She shuts and locks it.

She texts the list to Agent Collins.

Lupe video-calls Agent Collins.

LUPE (CONT'D)
This is Deputy...

AGENT COLLINS
This is a video call, remember?
I've got some bad news.

Lupe looks stunned and puzzled.

AGENT COLLINS (CONT'D)
I searched our database for the clues your victim gave us, and AI indicates ties to a similar crypto heist on August 18, 2024. A Washington, D.C., resident was robbed of \$230 million in cryptocurrency.

LUPE
I never read anything...

AGENT COLLINS
It was the largest crypto robbery in US history. To date, over \$100 million in Bitcoin remains unaccounted for.

LUPE
That could fund a lot of crime sprees.

AGENT COLLINS

Exactly. There was also a botched kidnapping of a Connecticut couple and a plot to demand ransom from their son, who was likely involved in the crypto heist.

LUPE

Like our kidnapping!

AGENT COLLINS

The crooks slipped up when they neglected to use a VPN when setting up the drop-off bank account.

(beat)

They won't make that mistake again.

LUPE

Were they apprehended?

AGENT COLLINS

The kidnapppers were caught, but never tied to the crypto heist, suggesting organized crime. We finally caught two of the perps responsible for the heist, but there could have been more. One of them still had \$20 million of Bitcoin on his phone when he was apprehended.

Lupe looks back at the door.

LUPE

Addison's phone was left behind when the ambulance took her away.

AGENT COLLINS

And get me the Socials for the three question marks -- NOW!

There's a loud KNOCK at the door.

JAWAN (O.S.)

They cut off her toe! They cut off her toe!

Lupe races to open the door. Agent Collins can see the terror in Jawan's face.

LUPE

Oh, my God!

JAWAN

They sent the video of her screaming. Then, they sent a photo of her severed toe. What do we do?

Jawan shows them the POOR-QUALITY PHOTO of the severed toe with blood on it.

AGENT COLLINS

Deputy Martinez, send me that video and photo immediately. I need to complete my risk assessment before we assign agents to your case. And our conversations are strictly confidential. Get me those Socials!

Agent Collins ends the video call.

Lupe holds Jawan's arm as they exit to the barn.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lupe stands in the middle of the group.

LUPE

I'm not at liberty to discuss my conversations with the FBI. I can tell you they are taking this situation very seriously.

JAWAN

How many agents are they assigning to this case?

LUPE

Agent Collins has not completed her risk assessment, and the weather will undoubtedly hinder their initial response. We do have the support of drone aircraft and their ongoing investigation back at headquarters, whatever that means.

JAWAN

So, zero agents.

LUPE

The FBI is demanding Social Security numbers for you and Addison, or they're not coming! Understood?

Jawan remains silent as Sanjay disappears to go to the restroom.

Lupe calmly turns to Chrystal.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Is there a way to the roof?

CHRYSTAL

There's a fake hay loft above the tack room.

Lupe snickers.

LUPE

Of course, there is.

(beat)

I'm going up to see if any devices were left at the base of the barn. You stay seated inside this room in case they have motion detectors. No one, I repeat, no one is to open any doors or windows to peek out! Got it? I'm going to peek over the roof to spot any improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, or to see if the perps are lying to us.

Lupe exits to the tack room.

EXT. BARN, ROOF - NIGHT

It's a howling wind with sleet-like snow when Lupe crawls onto the roof in her winter jacket.

Footing is slippery as Lupe makes her way along the roofline.

TENSE MOMENTS

Lupe slowly leans her head over the edge of the roof to look down.

She sees a blinking red light on a 1-cubic-foot-sized metal box.

She shakes her head in disgust and crawls slowly to the opposite side of the roofline.

TENSE MOMENTS

Lupe slowly leans her head over the edge of the roof to see a second blinking red light on a 1-cubic-foot metal box.

She shakes her head in disgust and crawls back.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Lupe dusts snow off her jacket and looks around.

LUPE
Where's Jawan?

SANJAY
Restroom.

Lupe speaks softly to the group.

LUPE
I spotted boxes with what may be
bombs at both doors.

CHRYSTAL
We're trapped like rats.

Lupe gets a video call from Agent Collins.

LUPE
I'll take this in the tack room.
Let's hope reinforcements are on
the way.

INT. BARN, TACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lupe shuts and locks the door before taking the call.

AGENT COLLINS
We have a situation. Three wedding
guests spilled the beans about the
wedding on social media.

LUPE
Chrystal, Wei, and Bertrand?

AGENT COLLINS
Ms. Chrystal West, Wei Li, and Ms.
Gillian White.

LUPE
Gillian, but she was a crypto
robbery victim herself.

AGENT COLLINS

Even stranger, the IRS informed me of two crypto transactions of \$50,000 each to Mr. Tatum West and Ms. Dakota West. The Whites were paid a day later.

LUPE

I didn't know the IRS could track Cryptocurrency transactions.

AGENT COLLINS

They are always on the alert for tax evasion and money laundering.

LUPE

Who sent them the crypto?

AGENT COLLINS

Their daughter. A few days ago. Recklessly, if you ask me.

Lupe pauses to think.

LUPE

That should have been unnecessary. What made it reckless?

AGENT COLLINS

Direct transactions to personal accounts can be easily traced by the IRS, which has experienced some leaks revealing information on the locations of individuals with crypto stashes.

LUPE

Did one of those leaks lead to the Washington, D.C., crypto heist?

AGENT COLLINS

Very likely, and our records show that your current situation is far worse.

LUPE

How so?

AGENT COLLINS

The combined crypto holdings in that barn may be twice that of the Washington job, and we're assuming Ms. Addison hasn't confessed to owning more crypto than everyone else in the barn combined!

Lupe looks back at the door.

AGENT COLLINS (CONT'D)

Sit tight, but be ready for anything. We'll talk soon.

Agent Collins ends the video call.

Lupe trudges toward the door.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lupe trudges to the group.

LUPE

We have to talk.

CUT TO:

INT. AMBULANCE - SAME TIME

The EMTs hover over Addison.

EMT #1

We got a text from our boss that you've been holding out on us.

ADDISON

I don't know what you're talking about.

EMT #1 opens and closes the bolt cutters.

EMT #1

That will cost you a toe.

Addison shakes and SCREAMS.

BACK TO:

INT. BARN - SAME TIME

Lupe paces with a worried look.

Jawan's phone RINGS with a text message.

His hands shake.

JAWAN

I got a video and a message.

He holds the phone out to show the group.

We SEE and HEAR Addison SCREAM. The message reads: "All crypto from everyone in the barn in two hours into our account."

Everyone gasps and sobs.

LUPE

I'll need to send that video to the
FBI.

Jawan yells.

JAWAN

A lot of good that will do. She'll
be dead before they can get here!

Lupe is stern and reassuring.

LUPE

The smartest thing we can do is to
follow protocol.

Jawan's phone RINGS again.

His hands shake too badly to answer it.

Lupe answers the phone to see a photo of a REMOTE CONTROL DEVICE. The note reads, "If you don't comply, you all will die!"

LUPE (CONT'D)

They're reminding us of the
explosive devices behind the doors.

Lupe forwards the two messages to the FBI while speaking.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I now think of this barn as a bank
with a lot of money and zero
security.

CHRYSTAL

Give us our guns back.

Tatum leads the others in grumbling and nodding, 'Yes.'

Lupe turns to Sanjay.

LUPE

No weapons! You're too irresponsible! I'll send the FBI an urgent call for backup.

Lupe sends the messages to Agent Collins.

WEI

We don't feel safe.

LUPE

Too bad! The last thing the kidnappers want is a shootout or to blow us all up. Once you're dead, you can no longer divulge your cold wallet locations and crypto passcodes.

Lupe points to Gillian's foot.

LUPE (CONT'D)

That's why they cut off toes instead of killing anyone. They see you all as returning customers. They can come back to you at any time.

Gillian is defensive.

GILLIAN

They didn't know I'd be here!

JAWAN

The Hell they didn't. You posted on social media, and you decided to come to our wedding. And I can't believe you reinvested in crypto after thieves cut off your toe!

Bertrand charges Jawan.

BERTRAND

You leave your stepmother out of this.

JAWAN

They could have followed her here to get to Addison and me.

LUPE

We don't know that, Jawan. They could have followed any of you here.

Wei gets in Jawan's face.

WEI

I warned you this wedding was a bad idea!

Chrystal gets in Wei's face.

CHRYSTAL

Because you wanted Addison for yourself.

Tatum glares at Dakota.

TATUM

She posted our plans to attend the wedding after she said she would never come.

DAKOTA

My stubborn husband said he wasn't coming either.

Lupe stares at them suspiciously.

LUPE

But something changed your mind, didn't it?

The guests look around suspiciously.

LUPE (CONT'D)

The thing is, they know you're all here now, and we've got to stick together.

Lupe receives an URGENT TEXT MESSAGE from Agent Collins.

Lupe turns to read the text privately. It reads: "Real-time phone records show you have a traitor in your midst. The kidnapers now know Ms. Addison owns a lot of crypto. CONFISCATE ALL PHONES NOW!"

Lupe remains calm.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Agent Collins asked me to collect your phones.

Everyone protests as Sanjay collects the phones in the same basket as the pistols.

BERTRAND

They are our only protection.

Lupe is louder and more stern.

LUPE

That's an order!

JAWAN

What if the kidnapers call?

LUPE

I'll take your phone call.

Jawan reluctantly hands his phone to Lupe.

TATUM

What's this about?

LUPE

The FBI is concerned that someone here is tipping off the kidnapers.

Everyone is angry.

TATUM

That's ridiculous! Maybe they're filming us.

LUPE

I checked the barn. No bugs.

BERTRAND

This is absurd! You have a body cam on! Suppose it was hacked!

They glare at each other suspiciously.

Lupe yells.

LUPE

The FBI has under two hours to find and rescue Addison. Within that time, you all need to divulge your cryptocurrency cold wallets and passcodes, or Addison may be killed, and we might be blown to smithereens.

Jawan looks away.

JAWAN

Addison never confided in me about her accounts. But if she's smart, she'll tell the kidnappers everything!

The mood sinks to a new low.

LUPE

You do have Addison's phone, don't you?

Jawan reaches into his back pocket and pulls out Addison's phone. He stares at it sadly.

JAWAN

It's facial recognition or passcode-protected and double-encrypted.

Chrystal looks away with a tear in her eye.

CHRYSTAL

Try 1-8-7-8-5-8. 1-TRU-LV. One true love.

Lupe steps to comfort Chrystal with a hug.

Wei points to Sanjay.

WEI

The traitor has to be the Indian!
It's not going to be the deputy,
and who else could it be?

Jawan agrees and also points at Sanjay, who looks frightened.

JAWAN

It's not going to be a family member.

Sanjay points at Wei.

SANJAY

He's not a family member, is he?

WEI

When he was taking everyone's Social Security number, he didn't write down his own!

Lupe steps over to Sanjay to protect him.

LUPE

It's true. He doesn't have a Social Security number, but he has no motive. He met you all today, and he knows nothing about cryptocurrency.

CHRYSTAL

You don't have to know about cryptocurrency to be a thief or a kidnapper.

Everyone eyes Sanjay with suspicion.

LUPE

And Jawan and Addison didn't surrender their Socials either! That sounds more suspicious to me!

EXT. BARN - SAME

In a field well away from the barn, a BLACK FBI HELICOPTER lands under stormy skies.

Two members of the FBI bomb squad step out of the helicopter and creep towards the barn with pistols drawn.

INT. BARN - SAME

Lupe gets an URGENT TEXT MESSAGE. It reads, "We're here to defuse the bombs. Move everyone into the restroom NOW!"

LUPE

Everyone must move to the restroom immediately.

Lupe escorts everyone to the restroom.

LUPE (CONT'D)

The FBI is outside. They're going to diffuse the bombs.

Chrystal is first in line to get into the restroom. Lupe is last.

INT. BARN, RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everyone crams into the restroom. They crouch in fear.

LUPE

We're going to be okay.

TENSE MOMENTS

They hear an EXPLOSION that sounds like fireworks rather than dynamite. The building shakes a little bit, but everyone is okay.

Agent Collins opens up the restroom door.

AGENT COLLINS

I'm Agent Deshaun Collins of the FBI. You're safe now, but we still have the matter of Ms. Addison White. Come take your seats in the barn.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Agent Collins and Lupe remain standing while everyone else takes a seat.

LUPE

What was that explosion?

AGENT COLLINS

The explosion you heard was when one of the devices was accidentally activated. It was a harmless firework, and our agents are fine. Where are their phones?

SANJAY

In the basket. I'll get them.

AGENT COLLINS

Who might you be?

SANJAY

Sanjay Dani, the caterer.

WEI

The help, you mean.

Lupe glares at Wei.

Sanjay delivers the basket of pistols and phones to Agent Collins.

Agent Collins glares at Lupe.

AGENT COLLINS

You're holding up a rescue. Ms. Addison's life is in danger.

Lupe speaks up confidently.

LUPE
I don't think it is.

Everyone is astonished.

JAWAN
But we only have less than two
hours to pay the ransom.

LUPE
No one's paying any ransom. The
family refused to offer up their
crypto accounts to the kidnapppers!

The parents look away with guilty expressions.

JAWAN
I have to get my wife back!

AGENT COLLINS
What's this about, Deputy?

All eyes are on Lupe.

Lupe paces as she speaks.

LUPE
Your new wife is not in any real
danger. Please let me explain the
events of this evening.

AGENT COLLINS
You'd better be right about this,
Deputy.

JAWAN
My wife's life is at stake!

Agent Collins gets in Lupe's face.

AGENT COLLINS
The lives of my agents and both our
jobs are at stake!

LUPE
Jawan knew the catering helicopter
wouldn't fly in bad weather, so he
sent me a copy of the guest list so
we could order food from the local
diner. And that meant hiring Sanjay
from the diner.

SANJAY

We apologize in advance for any
intestinal parasites...

LUPE

They were closed for the Christmas
holiday, so Sanjay volunteered to
help the cook.

WEI

So he poisoned Jawan?

Lupe circles Sanjay.

LUPE

No. I'm getting to that!

(beat)

My friend, Sanjay, might be seen as
a perfect suspect. He is a poor
immigrant without a green card or
Social Security number. He lives a
meager existence on a cash or trade
economy. He works hard for
everything he has, which isn't
much.

TATUM

He had the most to gain from the
heist.

GILLIAN

Yes, he did!

LUPE

Except I read that ninety percent
of heists are an inside job, and
Sanjay couldn't be more of an
outsider. He knew nothing about any
of you and your elegant lifestyles.

(beat)

Sanjay has an old flip phone and no
Internet service.

Wei makes a crinkled face toward Sanjay.

WEI

That's sad!

LUPE

He has none of the tools to be a
crypto mastermind. He's got a
Master's degree in philosophy,
which won't buy him a cup of
coffee.

CHRYSTAL

Idiot!

LUPE

Quite the opposite of the wedding party.

Lupe shows them a WEDDING PHOTO on her phone of Addison, Jawan, Wei, and Chrystal.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Before the wedding, I had time to Google the guests to see what we had in store. I saw that Jawan and Addison had virtually no presence on social media. How do rich people do that?

(beat)

They use people known as "Erasers" to keep them out of the spotlight. I couldn't find addresses, phone numbers, or even parking tickets.

JAWAN

That was an accurate but irrelevant assessment, Deputy. You have kidnapers to catch!

BERTRAND

We don't have addresses for the kids.

Lupe strolls around to Wei.

LUPE

It was a different story when I Googled Wei Li.

WEI

I know it looks bad...

LUPE

Jawan and Addison were living like reclusive billionaires. That's because Wei secured the short-term home rentals and purchased their airplane tickets...

WEI

Private jet rentals.

LUPE

Sorry, yes, and you rented their limos and bought their clothes, food, and supplies. They have no paper trail. That's hard to do.

WEI

That's what a Chief Financial Officer does!

LUPE

No, that's what a glorified Personal Assistant does. But, they pay you as well as a CFO, so you weren't complaining.

(beat)

Until that is, he proposed to Addison. It was clear from the wedding that you were extremely jealous.

Lupe smiles at Wei.

LUPE (CONT'D)

But because you loved Addison, it proves you didn't do it!

Lupe smiles at Jawan.

LUPE (CONT'D)

And you weren't involved in the heist for the same reason.

Lupe glances around the room.

LUPE (CONT'D)

But someone here tried to poison Jawan, not enough to kill him, but enough to request an ambulance.

Everyone looks around suspiciously.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I'll come back to that in a minute because that is what we call a red herring.

SANJAY

Or the Trout Almandine.

JAWAN

No, I had the meat-whatever-it-was. Addison had the trout.

Lupe is loud but stern.

LUPE

Neither contained poison. But I found two servings of the trout mixed in with the meat-whatever-it-was, and that's why everyone's breath smelled like almonds, which is an indicator of cyanide poisoning.

(beat)

No one was poisoned! It was just lousy diner food.

Lupe paces.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Back to the wedding!

(beat)

It was equally clear that neither Jawan nor Addison looked forward to having the entire family at the reception.

Lupe walks slowly behind the parents.

LUPE (CONT'D)

At first, I thought it was because you all were high maintenance.

The parents grumble and glare at Lupe.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Later, I realized you were all part of a well-thought-out plan for revenge.

Everyone looks around suspiciously.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Addison will tell us the truth when she gets here.

JAWAN

What do you mean, when she gets here?

Lupe gets in Jawan's face.

LUPE

I'm getting to that, Jawan. Be patient.

(MORE)

LUPE (CONT'D)

But I'm guessing you didn't know your dad and stepmom, and Addison's dad and stepmom did not intend to attend your wedding.

TATUM

Why is that, little lady?

Lupe pats Tatum on the shoulders.

LUPE

Google Finance says MidTex Petroleum makes far more money on wind than oil, but that the grass production is doomed by climate change and can no longer feed your wife's cattle.

(beat)

I bet your real money is in crypto!

Dakota snickers at Tatum.

DAKOTA

Stealing oil from the Earth to pollute our air and water. And cattle are a poor man's buffalo anyway.

TATUM

You always hated my cattle, so I gave them to you.

DAKOTA

I wanted your land, not your cattle!

CHRYSTAL

I knew it!

LUPE

You two are probably rolling in cryptocurrency that you've been hoarding for decades. Maybe you came to the wedding to squeeze more from the newlyweds.

BERTRAND

Sounds like a motive for the heist.

Lupe pats Bertrand and Gillian on the back.

LUPE

But that's not what was stopping
you from wanting to attend, was it,
Mr. and Mrs. White?

GILLIAN

That's none of your business.

Jawan is upset.

JAWAN

What is she talking about?

LUPE

Jawan, your stepmom never told you
she was the victim of a crypto
robbery because she didn't want you
to worry about Addison.

Jawan is shocked.

JAWAN

Robbery?

BERTRAND

We should have told you both. The
thieves held a gun to my head and
cut off Gillian's toe.

Jawan looks away.

JAWAN

Just like Addison?

LUPE

Not exactly.

Lupe shows everyone a PHOTO on her phone that shows a severed
pale white toe with blood on it. Everyone GASPS.

LUPE (CONT'D)

This isn't Addison's toe.

AGENT COLLINS

It's not?

LUPE

I'll get back to this in a minute.
(to Jawan)
Who advised Addison to send the
four parents the funds to come to
the wedding?

JAWAN

Chrystal handled the wedding arrangements.

All eyes turn to Chrystal.

CHRYSTAL

I provided my house and barn.
That's all.

LUPE

I don't think so, Chrystal.

Lupe gets in Chrystal's face.

LUPE (CONT'D)

You meticulously planned this wedding. You had a more nefarious reason for getting your sister to send your parents and new in-laws \$50,000 in cryptocurrency each.

Everyone glares at Chrystal and the parents.

LUPE (CONT'D)

It wasn't to get them to attend the wedding. It was to alert the IRS of crypto being transferred at a level that would attract their attention. It also set up what would have been the largest cryptocurrency heist in U.S. history, with you pulling the strings.

Chrystal is defensive.

CHRYSTAL

That's ridiculous!

Agent Collins searches through the phones in the basket.

LUPE

The phone you're looking for won't be in the basket. It will be a burner phone concealed by one of the guests.

Lupe makes her way around the room, passing by Sanjay and each of the guests before stopping at Chrystal.

LUPE (CONT'D)

You're burner phone, please,
Chrystal.

Chrystal is defiant.

CHRYSTAL

I don't know what you're talking about.

The others are appalled and upset.

TATUM

Her sister would never do such a thing.

DAKOTA

Like hell, she wouldn't.

Lupe puts handcuffs on Chrystal.

LUPE

Chrystal West, I'm arresting you on suspicion of kidnapping, extortion, and grand theft. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to talk to a lawyer for advice before we ask you any questions. You have the right to have a lawyer with you during questioning. However, you must now surrender your other phone.

CHRYSTAL

I don't know what you're talking about! I want my lawyer.

BERTRAND

That isn't me!

DAKOTA

You better not have laid a finger on her, or I'll skin you like a buffalo.

TATUM

And I'll shoot you afterward.

LUPE

I'm sure she's unhurt. Those toes we saw were pale white, like they were off a cadaver or made with a 3-D printer.

Chrystal looks away.

CHRYS TAL
3-D printer. They never get the
flesh tones right!

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

LUPE
No nail polish either. Rookie
mistake. Your sister is going to be
so pissed!

CHRYS TAL
She always got all the attention.

Lupe finds a burner phone held by a garter belt under
Chrystal's western skirt.

CHRYS TAL (CONT'D)
That's illegal search and seizure.

LUPE
We have probable cause. Not facial
ID or password protected. That's
another rookie mistake.

Lupe calls the number on speakerphone. "That number has been
disconnected or is no longer in service."

Chrystal's eyes open wide.

Jawan gets in Chrystal's face.

JAWAN
Addison, better be okay!

The barn door opens, and Addison staggers in, shocking
everyone. She's cold but elated to see everyone. She shivers
in her wedding dress.

Jawan yells in joy as he grabs Addison's coat.

JAWAN (CONT'D)
Addison! You're okay.

ADDISON
The EMTs didn't hurt me.

LUPE
They threatened to cut off your
toes.

ADDISON
Yes, but they didn't!

Wei and the parents gather around Addison with cheers and smiles. They see that Addison has her big diamond wedding ring on.

JAWAN

They didn't take your ring!

ADDISON

That's not what they were after.

WEI

Thank God you're okay!

(looks down)

How are your toes?

ADDISON

My toes are fine. I'm fine. I'm annoyed that all this happened on my wedding day, but I'm fine.

TATUM

We were worried sick about ya!

DAKOTA

We felt so helpless.

BERTRAND

They let you go?

ADDISON

They pointed me to the barn before returning the ambulance to town. They paid in advance for the oil change and gave them a big cash tip for a test drive.

Lupe and Agent Collins begin to make calls on their radios, but Addison races up to stop them.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

They saved my life with that EpiPen! It was the worst asthma attack I've ever had in my life! Let 'em go, Miss Security Guards.

Lupe and Agent Collins contain their anger.

LUPE

I'm the Deputy...

ADDISON

I have to discuss family matters with my husband.

(glares at Sanjay)

(MORE)

ADDISON (CONT'D)

Can we get a couple of cold waters over here now? I've been in captivity, ya know.

Agent Collins yells.

AGENT COLLINS

Kidnapping and false imprisonment are felonies!

BERTRAND

My clients aren't pressing charges.

LUPE

Wasn't there a robbery of some sort?

Addison pulls Jawan to the Christmas tree in the corner of the barn as the parents return to their tables, and they look on with curiosity.

Addison glances to the back of the room and sees Chrystal handcuffed in a chair by the food table, with Lupe now standing beside her.

Addison begins to whisper, but stops as Sanjay delivers two bottled waters to them.

Addison and Jawan don't make eye contact with Sanjay.

Sanjay returns to the food table.

ADDISON

I gave them everything they asked for. They took it all from me.

Jawan's eyes open wide.

JAWAN

All of it!

Addison slaps Jawan's hand playfully and whispers to him.

ADDISON

Only the onshore Crypto. And only that new vanity coin by your favorite billionaire. I didn't tell them about the offshore accounts and the other coins. And, it's not like it's real money!

JAWAN

You were so brave!

ADDISON

Those kidnapers were that stupid!

Addison smiles weakly as she glares at Chrystal.

Jawan glares at Chrystal.

JAWAN

It was her. She had a burner phone.

ADDISON

Everyone does. But she was the only one I told about my new Crypto, other than you, and that was only to get the parents here to our wedding.

Jawan and Addison hug and look into each other's eyes.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

You know what we have to do.

Lupe sneaks close to listen to them.

JAWAN

Bury the story, or our other crypto values will tank.

ADDISON

Exactly! If this gets out, we'll also be targets of kidnapers, extortionists, and robbers from around the globe.

JAWAN

We should never have come here without backup.

ADDISON

That was our mistake. They scared me at first, but I was never in real danger if I cooperated.

Jawan hugs Addison.

JAWAN

We won't make that mistake again.

Addison leads Jawan back to Wei and the parents, where they are kissed and hugged again.

TATUM

We were worried sick!

GILLIAN

I'll say!

DAKOTA

Everyone's safe now!

BERTRAND

Can we get our pistols back? We
have the right to defend ourselves
if those idiots come back.

AGENT COLLINS

No!

LUPE

No!

Sanjay serves a glass of Champagne to all but Chrystal.

As Addison lifts a Champagne glass this time, she looks
Sanjay in the eyes and smiles.

ADDISON

Thank you, whatever your name is,
for your service tonight.

(to Lupe)

And thank you, Justice of the
Peace, for marrying us.

Sanjay smiles weakly and continues serving Champagne as Lupe
glares at Addison.

The group with Champagne glasses turns and raises their
glasses to her.

Agent Collins points to Lupe in the back of the room.

AGENT COLLINS

Deputy Sheriff Lupe Martinez
deserves all the credit. She's the
one who cracked the case.

The group with Champagne glasses turns to Lupe and raises
their glasses to her. They CHEER.

Addison finally makes eye contact with Chrystal. At first, we
see a cold, hard stare from Addison.

However, Addison begins to smile as she slowly walks to
Chrystal. The group with Champagne glasses follows behind.

ADDISON

We're not pressing charges.

Chrystal is stunned.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

Jawan said the same thing.

Lupe and Agent Collins shake their heads in disbelief.

Addison bends down and gets in Chrystal's face.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

It's our wedding day, and we won't let anything or anyone spoil it.

Agent Collins gets in Chrystal's face.

AGENT COLLINS

Neither of those two men you hired to steal the ambulance that was in for repairs had any medical training whatsoever! They imprisoned your sister for two hours! They threatened her!

JAWAN

(laughs)

We'll get them the best lawyers money can buy -- if you ever catch them!

LUPE

Chrystal, did you poison the bride and groom?

CHRYSTAL

Not a lot! And it was my idea for the EMTs to use the EpiPen.

LUPE

If either needed real medical attention, they could have died.

CHRYSTAL

Jawan heaved it up, and Addison knew she was having an asthma attack. She's had hundreds of them before I knew she was gonna be okay. I did it to make them appreciate each other more than worthless cryptocurrency!

JAWAN

(gazes at Addison)

I hate to admit it, Chrystal, but it worked.

TATUM

That doesn't make it right! But we would also like to keep all this out of the news.

BERTRAND

Damn right. Or the rest of our crypto could drop precipitously.

DAKOTA

(laughs)

There's nothing to see here!

Chrystal turns on Tatum, Dakota, Bertrand, and Gilliam.

CHRYSTAL

I knew you wouldn't stay mad at me for long.

Agent Collins and Lupe pace back and forth in anger.

BERTRAND

It's too dangerous when we all get together.

GILLIAN

We're like one giant bank, begging to be robbed.

Addison hugs her sister long and hard.

ADDISON

Poor Chrystal. That's why you did it, isn't it? To teach us all an important lesson. Cryptocurrency is for con men, not for us! And you saved my life with that EpiPen idea of yours! The EMTs said I felt better in twenty minutes!

Lupe glares at Addison, and Agent Collins is angry.

AGENT COLLINS

They weren't EMTs.

LUPE

They were kidnappers.

Chrystal stands with a tear in her eye and looks sorrowfully at Addison.

CRYSTAL

When my music career bottomed out,
the only thing I had to look
forward to was being your wedding
planner.

Sanjay turns and chuckles as he sips Champagne.

SANJAY

Sounds like a promising second
career.

Addison hugs her sister briefly with a weak smile.

ADDISON

We both wanted to get the family
together again.

JAWAN

Even if it was risky.

CRYSTAL

Things were better when we were
poor.

Chrystal catches herself.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Not poor, poor, like the busboy or
the cops, just rich enough not to
draw the attention of crypto
robbers, paparazzi, or charitable
organizations.

Addison nods approvingly.

ADDISON

You wanted us to be a normal
family.

Lupe, Agent Collins, and Sanjay roll their eyes.

LUPE

You broke a dozen laws here
tonight!

AGENT COLLINS

Somebody's going to pay.

ADDISON

It's not gonna be Jawan or me.
We've done nothing wrong.

JAWAN
(winks at Wei)
We don't have a paper trail, do we,
Wei?

Wei smiles.

WEI
No, sir! And no digital trail
either!

AGENT COLLINS
You won't get away with this.

ADDISON
Yes, we will because crypto makes
us too much money.

WEI
And it's a great tax shelter.

ADDISON
Yes, but we may be donating to more
charities.

JAWAN
Like high-end charter schools.

Addison hugs Jawan.

ADDISON
In case Jawan Junior comes along
someday.

The parents hug each other.

JAWAN
Maybe even rejoining social media.

ADDISON
By that, we mean Zoom meetings.

Jawan turns to Wei.

JAWAN
Schedule family Zoom meetings to
keep us all in touch.

WEI
Weekly?

JAWAN
Quarterly. Fifteen minutes.

LUPE

Kidnapping, extortion, false imprisonment, terrorist bombing attempts, bad country music...

ADDISON

There won't be a trial. Uncuff her, Deputy.

Jawan laughs.

JAWAN

That's what Presidential pardons are for.

Agent Collins shakes her head in disgust.

AGENT COLLINS

My team worked all night, and the only thing I have to report is an Indian with an expired student visa.

The wedding guests turn to glare at Sanjay.

AGENT COLLINS (CONT'D)

I'll be investigating large crypto transactions from everyone here. If I suspect anything unusual, I'll have the FBI, Justice Department, and IRS close you down entirely!
(yells at Lupe)

I want to see your full report and all your videos on my desk by tomorrow morning.

(on her radio)

Crew, get the chopper ready. We have to beat that ambulance into town. Over.

We HEAR a response from a male PILOT (40).

PILOT

Sorry, Ma'am. We're grounded due to the storm.

Agent Collins begins to stomp out of the barn, leaving the door open.

Sanjay runs to shut the barn door.

Lupe is angry as she uncuffs Chrystal.

Tatum snickers and leans and whispers to Chrystal.

TATUM

Those boys never intended to
include you when dividing the loot!
You got played like a Western
fiddle.

Chrystal ignores her dad and hugs Addison. They smile into
each other's eyes.

LUPE

You can't sweep the biggest crypto
heist on U.S. soil under the rug.
Over \$300 million, by earlier
estimates.

Wei, Bertrand, Gillian, Tatum, and Dakota look away with
guilty expressions.

Jawan turns to Wei enthusiastically.

JAWAN

You know the routine.

WEI

Deny, deny, deny, Sir.

Lupe glances at Sanjay.

LUPE

Come on, Sanjay. I'll take you home
to my trailer.

Lupe whispers to Sanjay as they exit.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I overheard Addison and Jawan say
that if this story gets out, crypto
values will tank, and they'd all be
targets of kidnapppers,
extortionists, and robbers from
around the globe.

SANJAY

So?

LUPE

I'll leak the entire story and
video out to every social media
platform tonight.

They giggle as they turn to snicker at the rich people.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I don't get mad. I get even!

Lupe calls Agent Collins on her phone.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Agent Collins, please come back and bring an extra set of cuffs.

The wedding party and guests are stunned.

Agent Collins storms into the barn with handcuffs ready.

LUPE (CONT'D)

I know why Sanjay didn't reveal his Social Security number. He isn't quite a citizen yet.

Lupe glares at Jawan and Addison.

LUPE (CONT'D)

But these two are, aren't they, Agent Collins?

AGENT COLLINS

Yes, Deputy. You were right. I just got word that they work for our sister organization, the CIA.

Everyone but Addison and Jawan gasps.

LUPE

That's why there was all this secrecy about their wedding, why they didn't reveal their Socials, and why their phones are double encrypted.

Lupe handcuffs Addison.

AGENT COLLINS

But there's no way two civil servants can make so much money without being crypto thieves themselves. Our salaries are only \$160K per year, but you're living like multi-millionaires! There will be a full investigation, and you two will spend your 20-year honeymoon in separate prisons!

Agent Collins handcuffs Jawan.

LUPE

They matched the description of two thieves in the Florida crypto heist.

AGENT COLLINS

If Deputy Martinez is right,
they've been using their CIA secret
identities to rob major crypto
holders all around the globe.

LUPE

(to Wei)

I'm sure you'll tell us everything
to avoid a life sentence.

Wei nods, "Yes."

Addison and Jawan glare at Wei.

Lupe and Agent Collins lead Addison and Jawan to the waiting
helicopter. They laugh their way out of the barn and slam the
door.

Sanjay winks into the camera (fourth wall).

SANJAY

Ten percent of the reward money for
these major thefts could be up to
hundreds of millions of dollars. I
hope Lupe will still give me a ride
home for my corroborating evidence.

FADE OUT.

THE END